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THEOPHANIES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE GREY WORLD

THE LOST WORD

THE COLUMN OF DUST

THE MIRACLES OF OUR LADY SAINT MARY

MYSTICISM: A STUDY IN THE NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF MAN'S SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

THE MYSTIC WAY: A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY IN CHRISTIAN ORIGINS

IMMANENCE: A BOOK OF VERSES

PRACTICAL MYSTICISM: A LITTLE BOOK FOR NORMAL PEOPLE

JOHN OF RUYSBROECK

THEOPHANIES

A BOOK OF VERSES

BY

EVELYN UNDERHILL

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ac

" Every visible and invisible creature is a theophany or appearance of God."
John Scotus Erigena.

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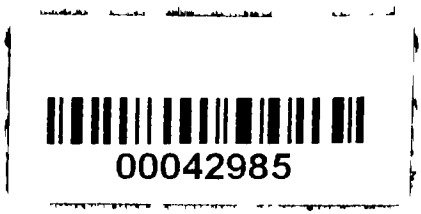

FOR HILDA

Sweet fennel in our garden grows,
White lavender, and herb of grace.
Cat-mint and thyme its edges close;
It is a green and silver place
Where marjoram, basil, maudlein, cicely
Make scented melody.

There rosemary and balm are found
Wherewith the wounds of life are healed;
There humble woodruff mats the ground
And hoards the magic of the field.
The holy vervein, hyssop, bergamot
Give blessing to the plot.

Those hasty hearts that hurry by
The coloured borders to applaud
Know not the hidden worlds that lie
Within these narrow coffers stored;
Yet, to the gentle touch of those who seek,
The herbs in fragrance speak.

Then in the prudent mind's defence
Of welded thought, a breach is made
And down the alley-ways of sense
Strange poignant dreams the soul invade—
News from beyond our stubborn ramparts blown,
And here in perfume known.

Those ramparts, they are builded tall;
But we a secret gate possess
That opens in the outer wall
What time its living latch we press:
A little emerald gate, that sets us free
Within eternity.

NOTE

MANY of the following poems have already appeared in the pages of *The Quest*, *The Nation*, *The New Weekly*, *The Challenge*, and *The Westminster Gazette*. "Prayer" is reprinted from the *Blinded Soldiers' and Sailors' Book*, and "William Shakespeare" from *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*. All these are now republished by kind permission of the editors concerned.

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THEOPHANIES

MOUNTAIN FLORA

As the plant on the smooth of the hill
That sees not the deep and the height,
That knows not the might
Of the whole—
I am rooted and grounded in him,
The small leaves of my soul
Thrust up from his will.

I know not the terrible peak,
The white and ineffable Thought,
Whence the hill-torrents flow
And my nurture is brought.
I am little and meek;
I dare not to lift
My look to his snow,
But drink, drop by drop, of its gift.

Some say, on the face
Of that ultimate height
Small plants have their place:
Rapt far from our sight
In the solitude strange

Where the infinite dream mounts range beyond range
To the infinite sky, there they grow.

Where the intellect faints
In the silence and cold,
There, humble and glad, their petals unfold.
As the innocent bell
Of the Least Soldanella thrusts up through the snow,
So the hearts of the saints
On the terrible height of the Godhead may dwell;
Held safe by the Will
As we, on the smooth of the hill.

DYNAMIC LOVE

Not to me
The Unmoved Mover of philosophy
And absolute still sum of all that is,
The God whom I adore—not this!
Nay, rather a great moving wave of bliss,
A surging torrent of dynamic love
In passionate swift career,
That down the sheer
And fathomless abyss
Of Being ever pours, his ecstasy to prove.

As the glad river's life
More glad becomes in music of much strife,
So does that spiritual flood
Dashed in full song,
In quick stupendous majesty of joy
The oppositions of the world among,
Come to fair crest in every breaking bud:
Yea, can the very conflict's self employ
A coloured spray of loveliness to fling
Athwart the world-wide landscape on the wing
Of every flying thing.

Dynamic love glints gay on the plume's tip
Of fat and restless wrens, tears at the heart
From the divine and vibrant bramble wreathes
That mesh the hedge with beauty. It out-breathes

Fragrance of pure surrender in the smart
Of sacrificial hay-fields. On the lip
Of frail ecstatic poppies it brims up,
As flaming meditations in the soul
Drowsed with deep passion. E'en the narrow cup
Of inconspicuous vervein still the strange
And awful tincture to fulfilment brings:
There doth my Dear pursue his chemic art,
And thence distils the magic of the whole.
For Love is time, succession, ardour, change;
It is the holy thrust of living things
That seek a consummation, and enlace
Some fragment of the All in each fecund embrace
Whence life again flows forth upon its endless chase.

Love ever moves, yet love eternal is;
Love ever seeks, yet seeks itself to find;
And, all-surrendered to the leman's kiss,
Doth but itself with its own passion bind.
O sacred, ceaseless flow!
O wondrous meeting
Of the unchanging and the ever-fleeting,
That still by the sad way of sorriest lust
Confers a secret glory on the teeming dust.
See! by love's loss we find ourselves indeed,
See! the world's death the world's true life doth feed,
And Love dynamic to Love's rest doth go.

THE VOICE FROM THE CROSS

I

"MAN, 'twas for thee
God hung upon the Cross and said, 'I thirst.'
Yea! he was broken of thy cruelty."
"Yet God was cruel first.

"His was the art
That wreathed the brow of life with thorns of pain.
He set at his creation's very heart
A Lamb that shall be slain.

"Within the bosom of his thought
He spun the dreadful pattern of the wild;
Saw the small beasts within its meshes caught,
Said it was good—and smiled.

"His eager will
Hath taught the cat her gracious spring;
His flawless skill
Catches the blackbird on the wing,

"Contrives the parchèd tongue,
The gift of water long denied,
The furry field-mouse slain beside her young,
The weasel's quarry—and the way it died.

" He made the sea: his hand
Prepared the teeming horrors of the shore,
The gasping fish tost high upon the strand,
The starving gull that tore

" Its poor quick flesh. His wisdom and his power,
Of their all-knowing choice, all things have made
In living loveliness and strength to flower
And on the Cross be laid.

" From these, the cup
He feared to drink shall never pass away;
All things that live with their Creator sup,
All things the kiss of beauty doth betray,

" Mocking with sullied breath
The life it serves and presses to its doom,
Making of every hill a place of death,
Each garden plot a tomb.

" All this his love controlled,
This he conceived, in this he found his rest:
The world his everlasting arms enfold
Lies crushed upon his breast.

" Taught thus,
Shall he be grieved that we
Out of the freedom he hath given us
Turn upon God with his own cruelty?

" Ruthless in might
We know ourselves to be his sons indeed
Who doth the children for the father smite,
Pollutes the guiltless seed,

" Sets the malignant fates
To play their sorry game of pleasant vice:
Then, with averted countenance, awaits
The certain issue of the loaded dice."

II

" In all that is, I dwell:
I am the Slayer, and I am the Slain.
Do thou thy deed, and all thing shall be well;
Bear thou with me my passion and my pain.

" Secure from harms
I hold embraced the living and the dead;
My generous arms
From nebula to nebula are spread.

" I am the Victim meet
Set up in every forest Calvary;
Mine is the torment of the city street,
And mine the restless sorrow of the sea.

" Yea! not alone
In the sharp throes of man's self-conscious grief
I for the error of my world atone;
Each falling leaf

"That dying gives its virtue to the sod,
The anguish of each mother-bird bereaved,
The patient dying beast—lo! here is God,
In these my holy spirit is conceived.

"All growing things that seek
A harmony and peace as yet unfound
Of my long passion speak;
The pregnant ground,

"The chirping cricket and exultant star,
The savage tempest and the shattered pine,
All these the members of my body are
And bear by right divine

"The fruitful pangs of my eternal birth;
Greatest and least, they share my ceaseless strife.
In them my saving will thrusts from the earth
Toward the risen life.

"In all my creatures' deaths I too have died;
My wounded hand the rosy cross unfurled;
I, risen again, from out my riven side
Feed and renew the world.

"Mine is the Voice that cries
In wood and desert, on the clouds and waves;
And mine the sacrifice
That tortures and that saves."

IN THE TRAIN

O TRAIN full of blind eyes, rushing through the world,
Fields lie on each side of you,
Full of life, starting with life; patient, fruitful, creative.
Don't you see the divine light lying in the furrows?
Don't you feel the soft hair of the nascent corn?

As for me, the soul spreads out from the body of me;
It passes over all the field, and the field becomes mine—
It and I, close-locked in passionate embrace—
And the moist ridged field gives itself up to me, all the life of it,
I am caressed by the childish touch of the corn.
My spirit stretches to its borders;
I know the supple curves of resilient bramble,
The obstinate plait of the thicket,
The fringed and secret ditches with their citizens,
The gate of dead timbers that opens upon mysterious roads—
Strange roads, crying to the pilgrim,
Where the feet of the soul may tread to the edge of the world.

All this is mine, and more, for I have the heart of the field;
I explore with tentative touch the maternal soil,
I know the recurring beat of the life within.
For me the innocent water shines in the furrow,
Steadfastly contemplating the infinite sky
As a mirror of prayer that lays itself out to the light.
Life is there, new life that awaits my worship;
And fading life, more holy, that dies to serve the unborn.
Where the long hedge leans to leeward
One little sharp, upstarting leaf I find;
And deep within the hearted curl of it,
Secret and strong as the wistful dream of a virgin,
The bud that shall bear the immortal germ on its way—
Small, humble, uncounted,
Pricking the path the future shall tread to the light.

Haste! haste! says the train, for life is movement itself.
Why should we haste? God is here.
He is within and without: though we grow tall, he comes no nearer;
Though we make haste, the earth flies faster still,
Ceaselessly treading her ritual dance in the skies,
Yet never removed from her place on the bosom of God.

You shall not achieve him, train scampering
through the world;
You shall not achieve him, souls adventuring in
the void.
Under the curve of my hedge is a life more lovely.
Not sad! not ambitious!
Meek, faithful, august;
Beautifully moving towards the bridal of death.

NIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN

I

NIGHT on the mountain. Soon I may not see
The sharp and spreading map,
The chequer-world of man's hard husbandry.
Comes white as wool the cloud veil that shall cap
The peak whereon I stand and stretch to thee.

Night on the mountain. Soft and silently
Out from their little dens the furred things creep:
They will not sleep
With valley-dwelling man, but wake to thee.
The fox from out its hole, the night bird from its nest,
I with the rest,
Yet not from any dear and hearted home
But from long exile come.

Long exile in the puzzling world, when all
Thy veils were close and bright
And picture set; yea, as a storied pall
Concealed thy night.
Long pilgrimage within the twisting lanes,
The deep and scented lanes, that wandered slow
Athwart the sleek profusion of the plains
But dared not seek
The solitary peak
To which thy lovers go.

Now the old words that once were mine and thine
Come to the lips and echo in the ear,
Now the white cloud draws near
And stills the restless limbs and shuts the peering
sight
From all thing save thy night—
The caverned door of our unshuttered shrine.

II

Strange, holy night, Eternity's caress,
Most apt for happy lovers to enjoy;
Thou dost redeem the foolish dreams of men
Bewildered by the dreadful day's employ.
How the white flowers upon thy breast do burn
And tell thy dark excesses. Thou dost turn
Each candid primrose to a moon of light;
Thou dost enchant the fingers of the fern
Stretched from the woodland to assoil our sight
From the sharp day's distress.
When homely shapes put on a priestly dress,
When from the dewy fields new presences arise
And grave trees standing there
Lift up great arms in prayer;
When the dim ground
Hath soft mysterious movements of desire
And every hill converses with the skies—
'Tis then
Our little star at home in heaven is found,
And we and it are gathered to thy heart.
Then muted adoration hath its part,

Then comes the hush of grace and wraps us round,
Then comes the flame of love and gives us of its fire.
Then, undistracted by the heady sun,
We are with thee as once ere all began,
Made partners with the ardent worlds that run
Across thy bosom's span;
Knowing themselves to be
Radiant of love and light because they rest in thee.

Dear night, I love thee. Take me by the hand,
Make thou the ferment of my thought to cease.
Teach me thy wisdom. Let me understand
Thine unstruck music. Give my soul release
From the day's glare and din.
Lift thou the latch, that I may push the gate
And let my Darling in.
He stands without, he wearies not to wait
Before my threshold till
Thou hast made all things proper to our state
And every voice is still.
Then thou and he shall enter side by side,
Thy banner shall he set above his bride,
The curtains of thy splendour shall be spread
About our marriage bed.

CLOUDY WEATHER

THE sky was broidered o'er with cloud to-day,
Wonderful to the sight:
Golden and grey,
Sombre and pale,
Silver and white.
Pinnacled fanes were there, and little flocks at play;
And who should miss the heavens, when this their veil
So great is, and so gay?

But as I watched there came a little breeze,
And moved them to more wondrous fantasies,
And took their shapes, and hurled
Cloud-world incredible upon cloud-world.
And lo! a sudden rift;
And there peeped out at me
One little magic patch of innocence
Most sweet to see,
That did the heart uplift,
And carry thence
Into the unwalled solitudes of light
My sad industrious sight,
That was so busy with the cloud's pretence.

O purging wind!
Blow down the skies again,
Scatter the clever cloud-drift of the mind,
The strangely sculptured vapours of the brain;
And let his blue
Peep through.
One little space of clear,
That steadfast smiles between the moving thought
All in grey mazes wrought:
As the deep glance
Suddenly caught
Of loving eyes that watch us through the dance,
Mimics his art,
And strikes a blessed stillness to the heart,
And says: "My Dear!"

SAFETY

Most wonderful, most deep security
That circles in the soul at hours of pain.
When the assaulting harms
Of death and love and treachery set on,
When we must con
The dreadful lessons of mortality;
Then do we know the pressure of thine arms!
Held to thy heart
Shall we complain
That here we find our sharpest griefs again?
Within that wide and piteous embrace
All torment, as all rapture, finds a place.

Give me a part,
Exultant anguish cries aloud to thee,
In the sharp pangs of thy felicity—
The hard perpetual birth
Of beauty, music, mirth—
For I would share
E'en thy self-mergence in the world's despair.
Lifted with the long movement of thy breath,
That draws toward the secret sum of life
And outward rushes to the world of death,
Gladly I go
From utmost ecstasy to sorriest strife,
For well I know
It is the Heart of God that sways me so:—
Thereon I rest, therewith I sweetly move,
Rocked by the rhythmic process of his love.

FELL ASLEEP

M. C., November 16th, 1913

He does not sleep.
How could that eager mind be stilled by death?
How shall the heart that did such commerce keep
Cease with the body's breath
To throb with the world's joys and agonies?
These were his life, and these
His life shall be:
The love-emblazoned robes of immortality.

Lo! the free soul, that once the brain did fret
With dreadful limitations, and make vain
Its upward-soaring passion, doth forget
That intellectual pain.
Joyful it spreads its wings
On the one ultimate flight toward the edge of things;
Yet does not roam
From the remembering heart, wherein it makes its home.

NEBULA AND NEST

I

I HAVE fled far!
I have not stayed my quest for any star
That in my pathway stood
And sang in the soul's ear,
" Behold the Good! "
But I have sought the sphere
Wherein his thought immense—
His love, his dream,
His ardent seeking sense
Of uttermost exactitudes that seem
All novelty and flow and wilful change—
Crest upward first toward creative joy:
And from the dreadful range
Of absolute and unconditioned Mind
Door of deliverance find
In sweet employ.

I stretched upon his storm my fragile wings,
And went with the great wind
That poured its music through the frame of things.
Dreadful was the embrace
To which we rushed beyond the edge of space:
For he that is all-loving would immerse
His fulhead in the Nought,
His immemorial thought

Utter through strife.
Yea! as melodic fire
That sought the consummation of desire
All down the exultant trumpet of the skies,
Athwart the spreaded strings
Of vibrant light,
There was our flight,
And as a speedful song was our emprize.

So have I seen the sacred stream of life
In one swift act sublime
Enter our universe;
The bridal of eternity and time.
Then in the womb of darkness there began
Soft movements of maternal energy,
And golden filaments of life that ran
Athwart the dim.
Then first was laid the plan
That builded upward to the soul of man
And bore to him
Far in the wild
A veritable child.

II

Yea, I have travelled far,
I have not stayed my quest for any star
Nor found in any sun the light I need:
Authentic converse with the unconfined
This might alone suffice mine avid mind,
This might alone my hungry spirit feed.

Now in and in I come,
Out of the mists of distant nebulæ
Swing again home:
Entering at last,
The edgeless solitudes of God o'erpassed,
That one warm narrow place
Where mind is free
From the terrific liberties of space
And the heart best
Can make for him a nest.
And as the palmer, coming home again
From the sweet Sepulchre,
Finds Christ afield amongst his fellow men
And summed in her
Who waits him, all his portion of that grace
Which shone from Mary's face:
So the pale skies
All lucent with God's love
And the swift cloudy spirits that arise
Wistful of some unthought divine surprise
Full friendly prove
To this my quest, and heal my hungry pain.
Yet softly say, "In vain
Thy pilgrim's scrip and all thy traveller's state.
As we around the earth in pageant go
Yet to no goal attain,
Thou dost but tread the orbit of thy brain
In thine ecstatic flight
That would achieve his dread excess of bright.
Not so
The limited the Limitless may know.

Wait, pilgrim, wait!
Cleanse thou thy sight,
Prepare thine ear,
To see him in his light,
The flowering of his melody to hear.
His feet are on the road: stay thou at home.
He shall appoint a meeting when he come."

III

How still it is!
And yet there's music here,
Music alone goes with me all the way
Divinely clear.
Thou dost beat out at me
From the leaves of the chestnut tree,
Here at my window peeping as I pray,
Thy very Self-hood's bliss
In life's rich fugue confessed;
Thy heart's dear melody
By crescent form expressed.
And I, that all the fervours of the abyss
Might not delay,
Am caught in thy bird's nest—
Meet shelter of the smallest soul that sings—
Find, nestling warm against a feathery breast,
My long-sought rest,
And fold my weary wings.

HEAVEN—PURGATORY—HELL

"The soul, when it departs from the body, needs not to go far: for where the body lies, there is Heaven and Hell."—*Jacob Boehme.*

CLOSE-RANKED within my room they stand,
The holy spirits of the dead.
Some grope the air with piteous hand
Of newly blind, who would be led
They know not where, and cannot rest:
But some with seeing eyes are blest.

A solemn light enfolds them all:
It is a light they never knew.
To some it is a fiery pall
That burns their vision; but a few,
With closèd eyes, in ecstasy
Rejoice within the flame to be.

For these are they that eager sought
The love which purges earthly stain,
And lavenders the tainted thought
And brings its fragrance back again:
Content its anguish to endure
If so their vision may be pure.

Steadfast they stand: they do not fear
The faithful sculpture of the flame
That makes the holy outline clear
And brings to light the hidden name—

Long hid beneath the rust of earth—
Which sealed the splendour of their birth.

But some there are who cannot stay
And bear the burning of the fire:
Pursued upon their endless way
By onslaughts of unstilled desire
As by a rushing hungry wind,
They have no skill release to find.

On baffling gales of passion driven
They sweep the peaceful ranks above;
As scudding clouds, by tempest riven,
Across the starry spaces move
And cast their tattered shadows down
On patient field and ordered town.

Sad, fevered lovers who in vain
Pursue the last consummate hour,
Some final ecstasy to drain,
Its dread sufficing sweets devour—
So, by the lust of God possessed,
The damned pursue their ceaseless quest.

Avid they are, they know not why;
They seek, and know not what they crave;
But stream across that homely sky
Wherefrom the blest all comfort have.
Fiercely they hunt their final bliss,
Nor mark the changeless joys they miss—

The glad surrender of the bright
And sparkling souls, that unafraid,
Deep drowned within the burning light
Are partners of its radiance made;
Nor know themselves, save as they shine
Within the heart of Love divine.

All have they found, for all they lost,
Nor restless sought their own to win;
But reckoning not the final cost
They plunged the healing flame within,
As happy swimmers bold to leap
And trust their bodies to the deep.

All souls within my room are met:
Here glows the heavenly light and fire,
Here is the place of cleansing set,
And here the hell of false desire.
Yea! here is God, in whose embrace
Each living spirit finds its place.

THE TREE

SPREAD, delicate roots of my tree,
Feeling, clasping, thrusting, growing;
Sensitive pilgrim root tips roaming everywhere.
Into resistant earth your filaments forcing,
Down in the dark, unknown, desirous:
The strange ceaseless life of you, eating and drinking of earth,
The corrosive secretions of you, breaking the stuff of the world to your will.

Tips of my tree in the springtime bursting to terrible beauty,
Folded green life, exquisite, holy, exultant;
I feel in you the splendour, the autumn of ripe fulfilment,
Love and labour and death, the sacred pageant of life.
In the sweet curled buds of you,
In the opening glory of leaves, tissues moulded of green light;
Veined, cut, perfect to type,
Each one like a child of high lineage bearing the sigil of race.

The open hands of my tree held out to the touch of the air
As love that opens its arms and waits on the lover's will;
The curtsey, the sway, and the toss of the spray as it sports with the breeze;
Rhythmical whisper of leaves that murmur and move in the light;
Crying of wind in the boughs, the beautiful music of pain:
Thus do you sing and say
The sorrow, the effort, the sweet surrender, the joy.

Come! tented leaves of my tree;
High summer is here; the moment of passionate life,
The hushed, the maternal hour.
Deep in the shaded green your mystery shielding,
Heir of the ancient woods and parent of forests to be,
Lo! to your keeping is given the Father's life-giving thought;
The thing that is dream and deed and carries the gift of the past.
For this, for this, great tree,
The glory of maiden leaves, the solemn stretch of the bough,
The wise persistent roots
Into the stuff of the world their filaments forcing,
Breaking the earth to their need.

Here is eternity's sword that pricks through the scabbard of time,
Here is the virginal life that waits on the lover's will.
How subtle the Spirit's path!
How silent the quickening rites!
No anguish of frustrate desire,
No madness of impotent strife,
Refusal and terror and rapture, craving withdrawal and grief.

Tall tree, your name is peace.
You are the channel of God:
His mystical sap,
Elixir of infinite love, syrup of infinite power,
Swelling and shaping, brooding and hiding,
With out-thrust of delicate joy, with pitiless pageant of death,
Sings in your cells;
Its rhythmical cycle of life
In you is fulfilled.
His drama of birth and decay, his dance of renewal and rest,
Simply, without reluctance,
These have you played.
His patient wintry faith, invincible
As the long dreams of leafless branches are,
The urgent hope of his eternal spring,
His charity, as summer charged with life
That dies into an autumn of rich deed—
These you proclaim.

APOCALYPSE

" I saw," said John the Seer,
" New heaven and new earth." But I, each day,
Behold thy new creation that draws near
On every budding spray.
Yea, down the stream of time the thundering hoofs
I hear
Of horses shining white and strangely grey,
That bear upon their way
The kings of death and life, the true and faithful
kings.

" I saw," said John the Seer,
" The Mother of all life, her travailings."
But I have seen the birth of many a year,
And lovely childish things
Snatched back to God, because they are so dear
No haven can avail, save his enshrouding wings.
I've known the sudden palms of many springs
Pass, like a fleeting sacrament of grace.

" I saw," said John the Seer,
" The Ever-living One, his awful face."
I in deep pools and clear
Have plunged my look, to trace
Faint and austere

In some uncharted place
Secure from flitting time, released from narrow space,
The First and Last, the Beauty new and old.

"I saw," said John the Seer,
"The dreadful judgments of his wrath unfold."
I am not thus. I know not how to fear
That love which drew the crocus from the mould:
Nor, whilst the skylark's song is in mine ear,
Can hear a sterner voice than that which told
His vengeful hosts their fury to withhold
From green things, grass, and trees,
Lest hurt should fall on these;
And said, that when his heaven indeed was come,
With men his tent should be, with men his wandering home,
And God should heal their griefs, and wipe away each tear.

CONTINUOUS VOYAGE

At twilight, when I lean the gunwale o'er
And watch the water turning from the bow,
I sometimes think the best is here and now—
The voyage all, and nought the hidden shore.
Is there no help? and must we make the land?
Shall every sailing in some haven cease?
And must the chain rush out, the anchor strike the sand,
And is there from its fetters no release?
And shall the Steersman's voice say, " Nevermore
The ravening gale, the soft and sullen fog,
No more the cunning shoal, the changeful ebb and flow.
Put up the charts, and take the lead below,
And close the vessel's log "?

Adventure is a seaman's life, the port
Calls but the weary and the tempest driven:
Perhaps its safety were too dearly bought
If that for this our freedom must be given.
For lo! our Steersman is for ever young
And with much gladness sails beneath the stars;
Our ship is old, yet still her sails are hung
Like eager wings upon the steady spars.
Then tell me not of havens for the soul
Where tides can never come, nor storms molest;

My sailing spirit seeks no sheltered goal,
Nought is more sad than safety—life is best
When every day brings danger for delight,
And each new solemn night
Engulfs our whitening wake within the whole.

Beyond the bent horizon oceans are
Where every star
Lies like an isle upon Eternity.
There would I be
Given to his rushing wind,
No prudent course to find
For some snug corner of Infinity;
But evermore to sail
Close-reefed before the gale,
And see the steep
Great billow of his love, with threatening foam,
Come roaring home
And lift my counter in its mighty sweep.

ON READING DOSTOÏEFFSKY

HERE'S a new soul unveiled, all trembling fire;
As fire unstable, eager, tender, fierce;
With sudden pains our sodden thought to pierce
And lights and ardours apt for all desire.
Here's sordid, holy man, all mind and mire,
Deep wells are here for storing of slow tears,
Grey sterile tracks down-trodden by hard years,
Quick saving dreams that from the slime aspire.

And as some tarnished mirror full of flaws,
Strange crooked faults, deep cracks that twist the rays,
May catch the sunny splendour, and because
Of those same scars, flash back a sparkling light;
So, keen and fair, to mock our scornful sight,
This broken glass the Kingly Face displays.

LILA, THE PLAY OF GOD

"The whole world, says Kabir, rests in his play; yet still the Player remains unknown."—*Poems of Kabir.*

What the sport, and what the aim,
Shrouded Player of the Game?

Lord, the magic of thy play,
Ever changing, never still,
It enchants the dreaming heart,
It enslaves the restless will,
Calls it to the player's part.
All the moving scheme of creatures,
Running, flitting, growing, dying,
Rippling moods thy changeful features
Quick reflect: the voices crying
News of anguish and delight,
Certitudes of swift decay.
O the rush of birds in flight!
O the blazon of the may!
Holy fading of the day,
Mystery of marshes lying
Faint and still beneath the sky,
While the solemn clouds go by
And their massy shadows creep
Grey upon the glistering sheep.

Noble sport and mighty aim,
Shrouded Player of the Game.

Lord, the terror of thy play
Thrusting ruthless to its goal,
It affrights the seeking heart,
Troubles the astonished soul;
Warns it from the player's part.
Tramp of armies on their way
Lust of battle to fulfil,
Quick to maim and quick to slay,
Docile to the urgent will:
Stealthy tread of hungry beasts,
Strong and subtle, all their art
Framed to stalk and framed to kill,
Careless of the victim's smart.
Teeming life of worm and louse,
Guests at thine ignoble feasts;
Seething life of secret things;
Commerce of the charnel house
Carried upon countless wings—

Strange the sport, and dark the aim,
Shrouded Player of the Game.

In the town thy pieces move
Here and there, to serve the plan.
Some from off the board are swept,
Some in misery are kept,
Crushed by toil and racked by love;
Kept, they say, to play the man.
There within the netted streets,
Leashed and hooded, human dreams
Strive for light and air and peace,
Strive to compass their release

From the dreadful life that seems:
There thy watching mind defeats
Every move the captives make.
There for some poor folly's sake
Every day a piece is lost—
Lured by lust and joy and wealth,
Lost to love and peace and health—
Dost thou stay to count the cost?
Reckoning in the mighty plan
All the sins and griefs of man?
There the harlot's venomed breast
Lulls the weary lad to rest,
Sacring with her scented breath
Victims to thy dance of death:
Dost thou smile that wreck to see?
Is the sport so gay to thee?

Cruel sport, and dreadful aim,
Shrouded Player of the Game.

Lord, the horror of thy play,
How shall man forgive thee this?
How accept his tardy bliss,
Purge the stain of life away?
Squalor to attaint the good,
Soil the sweetness of his mood,
Foulness in his daily food,
Angels in his ear to cry,
"Thou shalt kill, or thou shalt die."

What the sport, and what the aim,
Shrouded Player of the Game?

THE DAY BEFORE

I THOUGHT, when they said that this must be,
I should turn and cling to thy friendship then—
That secret bond between me and thee—
Clean away from the world of men.
But now from my window I lean and pore
On the rich thick life that goes past the door:
I cannot think of the Spirit more.

I know one should live detached from things;
And I thought I did, till they sent me here.
It's strange how the tide of feeling brings
New loves and hates, as the knife draws near.
I love the sky. There's a moon to-night!
Am I going away from the heaven of sight?
Can the eyeless soul apprehend the light?

To-night to strive on my lonely bed
With the sick dismay of the frightened flesh:
To-morrow, perhaps, the Fisherman Dread,
Trawling the world, will catch in his mesh,
Sleeping under the surgeon's hand,
The growing life whose delights I planned—
And I? Shall I watch and understand?

What will it seem to my soul, I wonder,
The cleavage made in the woven dress?
Will it feel that its home is rent asunder?
Will it shrink and flee from the knife's caress?
I think it will slip from the drowsy brain,
Lift the latch of the house of pain,
And tread the invisible tracks again.

There shall I watch while the slit is made,
The red sharp breach in the city wall,
And the secret net of its streets displayed;
Displayed to the intimate gaze of all.
Far off I shall stand, and at last shall see
The thing they have always confused with me.
What will that hour of vision be?

But now I am safe on the homely earth,
Safe in the skein of things that grow.
I cling to my place on that wheel of birth,
I love its noise and its movement so.
Easy and light is the body's yoke—
See! the curve of the mounting smoke.
Hark! 'twas the voice of the street that spoke.

A LONDON FLOWER SHOW

See the faces of the flowers,
Strange and fair,
Watching through the weary hours
Whilst the herded humans stare.

Like country saints brought up to town
From cloistering wood and lonely down,
Remote they seem;
Wrapt in a wistful dream
Of upland meadows fragrant to the sun,
Rich with an ardent life for ever new-begun,
And quickening winds that go
With ghostly steps across the supple grass,
Shaking from all who grow
Music of adoration as they pass.
In this sad air, they say,
No plant can pray.

Here is a daffodil,
Six-winged, as seraphs are;
They took her from a Spanish hill,
Wild as a wind-blown star.
When she was born
The angels came
And showed her how her petals should be worn.
Now she is tame,
She hath a Latin name.

There, set in mimic rock—
As if to mock

The ultimate austerities of love
That must in poverty its passion prove—
A mountain hermit in his furry dress;
Brought from the creviced height where he alone
Sang from the sheltering stone
Perpetual psalm of joy,
And did his private ecstasy confess;
Forced to disclose
The secret that he whispered to the snows,
And sold to make a gardening woman's toy.

Yet, with their homesick eyes
As other saints,
So these evangelise:
Into our smutty streets, where beauty faints,
Bringing authentic news
Of Paradise.
How shall a flower refuse
In heathen lands her gospel to declare?
Doth she not wear
The sacred sigil of the Only Fair?
In this shut room
She may not bloom
With the exuberant splendour of the free,
Crying in coloured joy her crescent ecstasy:
But still,
As generous lovers will,
She can exult to share his saving pain:
And, exiled from the field,
Her wild sweet magic yield
As part of Perfect Beauty's passion to be slain.

PRIMAVERA

Who knows the spring?
He, when he lays his hands
On any growing thing
Discerns the pulse of God, and understands
How that the Father's heart
Thrusts forth in steady rhythm of charity
To every part
His life and energy.

Not the soft vision of the feathered dove
To tell of grace inshed
He needs, whose subtle love
Can pierce the secret of the copse. Instead
He sees the living earth renew her plumes,
With sudden joy outspread
Her wide green wing
And sing
As once again her choric office she resumes.

Lapped all in God
And with maternal love encompassed round
How shall we wonder at the teeming sod,
The mesh of beauty spread upon the ground?
Keep rather your amaze
For sterile days
And silent stony stars,

Wherefrom the youthful Shepherd of the skies
Piping a song forever incomplete
Calls forth no answering lays
Of lesser whitethroats busy in the bough,
Nor living loveliness
Of melilot upspringing from the plough.
No woodruff to make sweet
The path before his feet,
Nor banners of the beech leaves overhead;
But foul distress
Of naked craters grinning to the light,
Dead forests, sapless spars
Whence never sudden scents redeem the night,
And grievous meadows where no lark can rise.

There the sequestered spirits of the dead
Go chattering down the windy loneliness
Like thin brown leaves that winter left behind;
They seek for evermore, and cannot find
The vernal fire
That lights old tissues with renewed desire.
There those who cannot love
Hell's solitude must prove,
What time the passionate and immortal spring
Goes forth all-conquering.

But there's another land
Where the green banners do eternal stand:
Where the brave seeds,
The dry and shrivelled seeds whereof we said
That they were surely dead,
Start from their sleep, and grow.

Urged of a hidden spark, they push toward the light
Plumes of delight
And thrust their eager roots into his night.
And so
Since at the heart of God it's ever spring
And all that lives is but the blossoming
Of his sweet stretching boughs, with tufted beauty wrought,
That bud in joyful deeds
And flower in deathless dreams more strange than thought;
These, grafted on his spray,
Fed on his sap alway,
Are born again
To share his vernal reign.
What time the restless earth
Draws near to April's heart, we for an hour
Partake that mystic birth;
Touch the sharp vigour of eternity
And taste the freshness of their ecstasy
Whose love is power,
Whose rapture of creation, never still,
Is nourished of his will.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Immediate light, ablaze, enfolding me;
And in its mesh some slow-distilling truth
That comes with subtle touch to stir the mind,
And catch the heart to rapture.

No heaven-high dream, remote, unearthly, dread,
The glory I declare: turn, turn, and see
Adventurous love, that leaps from out the world
Served by sweet growth.
In every twig and blade
I know the advent of my Saviour-God:
His moving thought is music in the wind,
The shining sword of his ascending life
Pricks the parched earth. In the unmeasured sky,
In the uncounted planets of the sand
Whose paces tell the rhythm of his joy,
In the bird's sudden note, I savour him;
And closer still he comes—
Comes, with his subtle touch to stir the mind,
And catch the heart to rapture.

Born kindred of the earth, burned by great rays
Of grace, impregnate with reality—
Where should I go, but to the lonely wild?
Far from the dreadful circle of good men
Who play at godliness, here will I wait

The Strong, the Pure, the Tameless, who shall
come.
His feet shall be within the ceaseless stream
Which sets towards the Sea. He shall endure
Unresting change; yet to his steadfast eyes
Winged life shall mediate Eternity,
And on his ears shall fall
The solemn music of creative joy.
He shall discern the unreal from the real,
He shall strike fire from out the souls of men;
He shall emancipate all fettered loves
And bring to birth the hidden Sons of God
Of whom Creation travails until now.

FLOODED FIELDS

As stilled and shining waters tell the sky,
And seem to bring celestial spaces near,
So may thy grace upon my spirit lie
To image forth the clear.
Let the floods rest which thou hast caused to be,
That those who look may there a vision find
Which I perhaps shall never come to see
Upon the troubled surface of the mind.
Deep would I have the heart's poor meadow hid,
Its sterile shame, its wreck of seasons past:
Litter of twigs, that once were living wood,
The mouldering straw of crops that withered fast,
The barren plot where wheat hath never stood,
Mat of dead leaves, where first the wind-flower grew—
By these thy grateful waters I am rid
Of that unhappy landscape, staring to the blue.

Patient is love, mighty and unafraid,
Steadfast its waters lie upon the land:
Yet not for desolation's sake they made
Man's husbandry as nought. Where the floods stand
Solemn and pale,
There in the darkness pricks the crescent blade.
Yea, when thou dost depart thy lustral veil—

Dread sacrament of mercy and new birth—
And the deep-sunken fields pass from their purging
night,
Then shall be cry of mirth;
The song of eager life, that leaps to meet the light.

Ah, not in pride they flower before thy face
That knew the visitations of resistless grace.
These shall not ask the dower of standing sheaves,
These may not yield the substance of thy bread;
But the small turf, inset with daisied leaves,
They give, wherewith life's simplest creatures may
be fed.

PRAYER

When the soul yields to prayer
The gate made of jacinth
Swings, stands ajar.
Scents out of heavenly places
Storm the sad air
On the gale that blows in the unmeasured spaces
Which link star to star.
Eyes shut to the landscape here where we are
Open elsewhere
When the soul yields to prayer.

The soul deep in prayer
As a hyacinth
Stretcheth forth from its pillar of bloom
Feelers of fragrance unseen
To the edge of the room.
So, held still and serene,
Of its outpouring gift unaware,
With radiance redeeming the gloom,
With sweetness assaulting the air,
Is the soul deep in prayer.

In the triumph of prayer
Twofold is the spell.
With the folding of hands
There's a spreading of wings,

And the soul's lifted up to invisible lands
And ineffable peace. Yet it knows, being there,
That it's close to the heart of all pitiful things;
And it loses and finds, and it gives and demands;
For its life is divine, it must love, it must share
In the triumph of prayer.

In the anguish of prayer
It is well! it is well!
Then only the victory of love is complete,
When the soul on the cross
Dies to all save its loss.
When in utmost defeat
The light that was fair
And the friend who was sweet
Flee away, then the truth of its love is laid bare
In the anguish of prayer.

HIGH TIDE

Flood thou my soul with thy great quietness,
O let thy wave
Of silence from the deep
Roll in on me, the shores of sense to lave:
So doth thy living water softly creep
Into each cave
And rocky pool, where ocean creatures hide
Far from their home, yet nourished of thy tide.
Deep-sunk they wait
The coming of thy great
Inpouring stream that shall new life communicate;
Then, starting from beneath some shadowy ledge
Of the heart's edge,
Flash sudden coloured memories of the sea
Whence they were born of thee
Across the mirrored surface of the mind.
Swift rays of wondrousness
They seem;
And rippling thoughts arise
Fan-wise
From the quick-darting passage of the dream,
To spread and find
Each creviced narrowness
Where the dark waters dwell,
Mortally still,
Until
The Moon of Prayer,

That by the invincible sorcery of love
God's very self can move,
Draws thy life-giving flood
E'en there.
Then the great swell
And urge of grace
Refresh the weary mood;
Cleansing anew each sad and stagnant place
That seems shut off from thee,
And hardly hears the murmur of the sea.

THOUGHTS ABOUT HEAVEN

I

Heaven's not a place.
Where time doth race
Across the flatted fields of edgeless space
Thou shalt not hear its news, nor its retreat discover.
No! 'tis a dance
Where love perpetual,
Rhythmical,
Musical,
Maketh advance
Loved one to lover.

II

Heaven's not a rest.
No! but to battle with new zest:
Untired, with warrior-joy
The sharp clean spirit to employ
On life's new enterprise.
It's the surprise
Of keen delighted mind
That wakes to find
Old fetters gone,
Strong shining immortality put on.

III

Heaven is to be
In God at last made free,
There more and more
Strange secrets of communion to explore:
Within the mighty movements of his will
Our tangled loves fulfil:
To pluck the rosemary we cannot reach
With the mind's span,
And so at last
Breathe the rich fragrance of our hoarded past
And learn the slow unfolding of the plan.
Together to unroll
The blazoned story of the pilgrim soul;
All the long ardent pain,
The craving and the bliss at last made plain.
Sometimes to sleep
Locked each to each
Within his deep,
Or playing in his wave
The sudden splendour of the flood to brave:
Great tide of his undimmed vitality
That breaks in beauty on the world's wide beach
And draws all life again toward its heart,
Stirring to new and mutual increase
Love-quickened souls therein that have their part,
Therein that find their peace.

NATURE

I

THE anguish, the lostness: my Dear,
Set so close to my hand,
Of all near things most near,
Murmuring within mine ear
A music that I may not understand:
Light of all light,
Soul of enshrouding night,
The subtle joy shook out from sullen pain,
The wonder that atones for the world's wrong,
New splendour on the corn,
New freshness of the morn,
Secret of every wind,
Fragrance of every song
So nearly known, yet ever sought in vain.

II

Soft the note strikes and clear,
All to make plain:
Theme of the ceaseless melody,
Clue to the hidden harmony—
And lo! it's gone, merged in the throstle's cry.
Again,
Sometimes from out the throng
There comes a glance, intolerably sweet,
And I,
All radiant in the gladness of surprise,

Turn swift to greet
Those all-revealing eyes,
That look, so deep, so kind,
That vision full of grace
Which I have waited long,
Ah! long and ardently—
Only to see
Thy veil, O Nature, that conceals from me
The one desirèd face:
My Dear One, whom I cannot touch or find.

III

Thou art a priest, O Nature, and from thee
All who believe
Assuredly receive
Enshrined in many a changeful accident
The substance of the only sacrament:
Yet, as some vagrant soul
That comes to the Graal Castle unaware
May not discern within the outward sign
The taste of the incomparable wine
Nor know
That it is fed
Of the sufficing bread;
Because the proffered fragment is so fair
It cannot pass beyond, to find the Whole
Embosomed there—
E'en so
I cannot find my Dear, for he is hid
Within thy living symbols, that conceal
The simple, secret thing they promise to reveal.

IV

I ask not beauty, but a little space
Swept clear for him;
Some naked place,
Intimate, dim;
Some haven where the fretted mind may rest,
Where thy quick colour and inconstant sound
At last are steadfast found,
And beyond thought all in one Thought are blest.
Just to be rid
Of this bewildering light,
That sets the world ablaze, and dazzles my poor sight
With all the teeming phantoms of thine art;
Just once between
The shifting splendours of the natural scene
To glimpse the faithful star.
For still, athwart the glamour thou dost fling
I hear the voice of One, the lost fair holy thing,
Crying to my heart—
Not from a distant land,
Nay, at my very hand—
"How far thou art from me: how far! how far!"

PHILOSOPHERS

Some with their little taper dwell alone
Snug in a shuttered room,
Nor probe the outer gloom:
Some, with a searchlight quartering the unknown,
Mistake its ray
For the eternal day.
Some, as the alchemist amongst his jars,
Explore to find
The essence of the mind;
But some, like mirrors turned towards the stars
Athwart the night,
Meekly receive faint light.

These ask not sorry reason to dissect
The rays that bless
With delicate caress:
Simply they take and simply they reflect
Gladly, in awe.
No crooked flaw
Breaks the white surface of their waiting thought:
Patient they kneel,
Content to feel
The pricking shaft of wisdom all unsought,
That to the heart
Its magic does impart.

The empty freedom of uncharted space
In vain we rove;
Their quiet love
Is to the inshed beam abiding-place,
And gives again
To other men—
Being the mirror of Infinity
Wherein may shine
Its galaxies divine—
The image of those stars we cannot see
Who have not eyes
For that far enterprise.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

THE SUMMIT

I WALKED alone upon the fell,
The upland was in solemn mood;
About me in their holiness,
As seers within a vision dwell,
The idle mountains stood.
Horned moss and sundew, as a live caress,
Leaned to my feet,
The air was sharp and sweet;
Even the woolly peoples of the place
Wore a transfigured face,
And all the landscape was of lonely hills.
Thus poised above the deep
To gaze upon his steep
My need, I said, fulfils:
Why should I climb?
Seen from the height, the hills were less sublime.

There was a guide
Invisible, went ever at my side.
He said, "Poor timid thing, that cannot dare
To risk the upper air,
The hard ascent
And stony summits, but would ever go
Just high enough for beauty and too low
For desolation, you shall never know,
Thus sheltered by the ring

Of noble dreams and mounting thoughts, the sting
Of truth, the wide horizons of the real.
Turn from the fair,
Climb, strive, slip, fall upon the pent
Of his steep home,
Until you come,
Breathless and spent,
To the bare summits that his world reveal."

So I went
With anguish and great toil, and came at last—
All joy, all hope long past—
To stand
Where the slope fell away on every hand.
Here was the arid rock: not any flower
Nor mosses grew,
A pure cold wind most terrible in power
Upon the summit blew.
A great bird started there
And wheeled and rose
And stood straight winged upon the vivid air.
Then said my secret guide: "Behold his view."
And far below
I saw outspread the coloured show;
The regiments of the trees, fields yellow with full grain,
The magpie-flash that marks the moving train,
The shine of living water, saw I from mine height
All wrapped in sweet blue light:
The knotted towns in smoky dreams held close,
Clean roads therefrom that ran

As eager thoughts from out the heart of man.
No squalor could I see, no murk of sin
Those streets within;
It was all soft and bright,
An angel's sight.

Then said my guide again, " Behold his view! "
And I, all pierced with cold,
My purged eyes made new,
Was caught into the vision of that love
Which all thing dares behold,
And from above
Looks down on his great farm;
Holding within his span
Not spiritual peaks alone,
The naked beauty of the sinless stone
And feathered things
Therefrom that spread their wings
And soar,
But the great world's wide floor—
The good and harm,
Sweet flower and fruit, foul litter and decay,
Yea, more!
The seething herd, the clucking foolish mass
That grow and breed and pass
To feed the festering clay:
All known, all understood,
And because loved, seen to be very good.

THE LIKENESS

THY children, thy wonderful children, brave, generous, free;
Sent out to the edge of the world, bearing their father's likeness everywhere.
Some thrust forth before they recognised thee,
Wandering away, ignorant of their family, their home:
Yet bearing their father's likeness everywhere.

Thine undaunted daughters of the slum,
Faithfully dealing with hopeless intractable life;
Fostering their broods in the dark basement,
Down at heel, slattern hair, yet radiant of love and of courage,
Fruitful of fresh souls, new strange disguises for thee.

Thy fair and delicate children, made for all gladness and beauty,
Suddenly struck with the cruel steel of thy pain;
And lo! a spark from the fire of thee, spark of high-hearted endurance.
Simply and bravely they suffer; and lit by the blow of thy pain,
The likeness appears, shining out, august, from within.

Thy creative sons, sharp tools in the hand of the Spirit,
Dreaming, making, finding, defiant of hardness and grief;
Loving better than father or mother the far-off fulfilment—
Seldom they speak thy name!
Yet these take their father's likeness everywhere.

Thy naughty ones, rebellious, cunning, adventurous,
Breaking the toys of their brothers, thrusting their tortuous lives athwart the respectable web—
These too!
Do these not exhibit thy vigour, thy rude inexhaustible freedom,
Correcting with flushes of passion our colourless pictures of God?

Hast thou thy favourite amongst these scattered children?
Hast thou any one of them of whom thou canst say: *This* is my beloved child?
Nay, I think not so.
Love buildeth her temple,
Its name is Life:
It hath columns strong and lovely, deep earth-set foundations,
Gargoyles for the amusement of thine angels, and pinnacles glad in the blue.
And the souls of thy children shall build it, thy mark is on every one of them;
All hast thou made for their office,
All have their place in thy home.

BEYOND THE GARDEN

I HAVE a garden, fencèd round
With thickets that no foot may pass;
All ordered joys therein are found
Of flower and fruit and daisied grass
For touch, taste, scent, and sight. Within the brake
The small tame birds a homely music make.

Rich are my borders, yet beyond
I know a fiercer life must be:
I have a deep and secret pond,
But far away I scent the sea,
And through the wordless whispers of the wood
Guess the grave voices of the mighty flood.

A gentle mist of measured rain
Here comes the summer thirst to slake;
But far above the viewless plain
I see the noble tempest break
In love torrential, eager to invade
Each striving growing root, each faint upstarting blade.

Of moonlit nights, I walk the ledge
Wherefrom my gateless thickets lean,
And seek to pierce that prudent hedge,
To thrust the plaited boughs between.
Vain! yet I suffer, poised above the steep,
The strange and stealthy onslaughts of the deep.

And once, there was a bird that flew
Far up the foreign clouds among;
The throbbing of its throat I knew,
I might not hear its song.
Swiftly it passed across my narrow sky,
The silent minstrel of Reality.

That day was anguish; thence no more
My garden can a pleasaunce seem.
It is a cage without a door,
That shuts me from a better dream.
My foolish twittering birds enslave an ear
That should another, wilder music hear.

The little scale my senses know
One note from out that music is;
In circling rhythms, above, below,
All form, all colour, and all bliss,
Besiege my garden ramparts, yet I strain
To catch those radiant melodies—in vain.

My scented borders drug the mind,
The summer woods enveil the view.
Come! winter, with your purging wind,
When life ebbs low, when leaves are few,
Come! cut the pathway to that outer night
Of fierce and seething joys, beyond my shuttered sight.

IN PATRIA

THOU art the all:
In thee to live and move
And knowing thee, to love—
This is to be.
So, whilst we are, from thee we cannot fall;
We are deep-sunk within that living sea.
We do not know,
As cutting paths we go
Through thy close-woven thought, that life is so.
We thrust and strive, our diligence to prove,
Thy frontiers to attain;
Yet at the journey's end we come again
(As seems to us)
To the one spot
Where thine unmeasured Point which changeth not
Is goal of every quest
And to all pilgrims rest.
Yea, though our busy dreams with childish art
Plait, turn, and cross
As if they only sought thy final loss;
Yet even thus,
Since thou art all and all desire dost bound
And every height and deep in thee is found,
We cannot miss thy heart.

WHITE MAGIC

JUST now, a sparrow flew across the window
space.
I saw keen wings,
I saw unpausing flight
Against the solemn curtains of grey light,
Against the stubborn forms of distant things:
And yet his vivid passage could not break
The timeless spell that broods upon the place
Where I am set to make
With craft and toil
My knitted world
From out the endless coil.

Some Hand
Has drawn a circle round me where I stand:
With delicate touch on the invisible air
He has shut out the circumambient scene
As by a rampart of containing thought,
And I
Athwart that spiritual screen
Look on a landscape foreign and apart.
The windy smoke is stretched across the sky
In long script strangely curled:
I know not what its hieroglyphs can mean.
With vacant eyes the stucco gables stare:
I know not what their sullen gaze would say
Of sad and restless souls imprisoned there.

Even my friendly tree seems far away;
It has no art
To bridge the gap that he has set between.
I cannot hear the whisper of the green
That once did reach my heart.

Within the enchanted ring
We are alone:
I, and that other Thing
Whom I have known—
When? where?
Ah, once when I was gazing on the stream
And saw the water mount against the stone
Smooth, solemn, strong, and irresistible,
And all fell from me but the unhurried dream
Of One that is all music and all power,
Whose will and love
Confers all meaning and all thing does move—
That was the hour!
Oft since, his sudden touch has come to me
From very far
And struck the hard doors of the heart ajar,
And fainted from me as a passing breeze
Made up of wild and errant melodies.
Now, circled in beyond the pale of speech,
At last
Other to each
In marriage gift sublime
May blest completion bring.
Whilst swift succession beats upon the ring
And darting time

Bird-quick across the window of the mind
Comes, hovers, and is past,
Held in this quiet I find
My Dear, long sought,
By still surrender bought.
Unheld Infinity
Constrained in love to me.

FOREST EPIPHANY

CHRIST comes to flower
Within my wintry wood, as once in Bethlehem:
The restless kings of wisdom, love, and power
His light yet leadeth them

Out of the narrow prison of the mind,
Out of the scented palace of their dream,
That Face to find
Which shall the dream fulfil, the thought redeem.

Not far
To-night the journey of the seeking soul:
His beckoning star
Stands still above the goal.

He makes his nest
Within the living world, safe in its sod.
There, in each sudden snowdrop manifest,
The earth shows forth her God.

DEATH

THIS surely I know—
However I go,
Wherever it be,
You shall be homely to me.
Yea! though I be wrecked in the infinite sea,
And the taste of the brine
As I sink to my sleep
Be all that I know of the deep:
Still, if it be so
I am content
To give back the life lent,
To return whence I come;
And, naked and spent,
To cease in my home.

BOND AND FREE

When the sweet morning, like a new-bathed child,
Comes running o'er the grass
And all the wild
Leans out to see him pass:
'Tis then
The sun-kissed folk that are unseen of men,
From moon-enchanted meadows of the night
Haste to acclaim the light.
Where the smooth hill's high crest
With feathery groves is drest,
Their ancient altar stands.
Between the meshy leaves their white limbs glance
In immemorial dance;
I've glimpsed their hands
That part the coloured boughs to make
Pale flashing patterns in the dusky brake.

Theirs is the living country of the soul:
As happy gipsies through its fruitful fields
They go. For them it yields
Sweet secrets and sharp raptures; we,
Content in earthy hermitage to dwell
As cave-men carving deep beneath the knoll
Their twilit citadel,
Are shut from these.

Their shapes we may not see,
Nor hear above our head
Their rhythmic tread
And chanted melodies.

We, with a bone or two beside the fire,
Have all our cramped desire;
And, coming forth to kill
Clean creatures to our need
Or rob the little patient patch we till
Of its maternal seed,
The arid ritual of our life fulfil.
How should we know
The sun-kissed folk, who move—
Impelled of what wild love?—
Upon the upland heaths and in the scented mow:
Who peer between tall trees,
And on a sudden breeze
Rush down the grey ignoring city street
With swiftly-sparkling feet
To leave behind
The wistful murmur of an empty wind?

Some potent charms there be
That can the prisoners of the cave set free;
Can wash their eyes
The joyous peoples of the light to see,
And make them share the gallant enterprise,
The glad and solemn feasts
Of that unnumbered throng.
The hidden song

Of a small blackcap in the thicket set,
Cold friendly noses of the trustful beasts
That all our ugly perfidies forget,
Strange haunting perfumes loosed upon the air:
All these our ancient heritage declare.

One leaf of marjoram at sunset pressed
Has oft revealed the country of the blessed.
Yet still, when evening falls and liberation comes
On plumy wings
From the night-scented precinct of our homes
And all the presences of simple things,
We creep
More deep
Our fetid cave within
And draw about our limbs some slaughtered skin.

FRIDAY NIGHT

In certain convents on every Friday night, the nuns scourge themselves; each kneeling in her own cell, with the door open upon the corridor. A verse of the *Miserere* is intoned between each stripe.

Must I take
The scourge in hand for Jesu's sake?
Kneel, and cry
"Mercy, mercy! God most high!"

Lord, I quail
At the Miserere's wail,
Yet I know
Love should joy to suffer so.

Give me grace
And courage for a little space,
Loving thee
So to bear love's penalty.

For the blame
Of all who mock thy holy name
I would give
This my flesh, that they may live.

For the wrong
Wrought by evil wills and strong,
Take the price
Of my body's sacrifice.

Take my all!
Hold my heart and soul in thrall!
Thou canst not
Take the splendour of my lot.

To the crash
Of the slow-descending lash
As I bow,
Lo! I am thy partner now.

I am found
With thee at the pillar bound;
I have worn
Bitter crown of budding thorn.

Yea! a part
Of thy dread atoning art,
Never done,
Is the penance of the nun.

Holy pain!
Smite, ah! smite me once again.
Precious blood!
Add my drop to thy great flood.

. . . .

—What is this?
Shall I dare to seek my bliss
In the grief
He endures for our relief?

Shall I dare
Claim the right of entrance there,
Where alone
God doth for his world atone?

'Twas in pride
Angels from his vision died;
And shall I
Set my little hurt so high?

Lo! I kneel
Full of wounds thy stripes shall heal.
Holy pain!
Make me, make me whole again!

First to dread,
Now to shame, have I been led:
Lord, I pray,
Purge the smears of self away.

By this smart
Shatter and re-make my heart;
Snatch my love
From the coils that pride hath wove.

Stablish me
In thy Spirit strong and free;
Let the voice
Thou hast quenched, again rejoice.

In thy sight
Shining with a sacred light,
Only then
Shall my wounds avail for men.

MARCH MUSIC

Impleta sunt, quae concinit
David fideli carmine,
Dicendo nationibus
Regnavit a ligno Deus.

All down the windy woods, along the throbbing hedge,
And in the starting sedge,
Yea, in all choirs and places where they sing,
I hear its growing cadences that ring;
Noblest of the processionals of earth,
The great Vexilla Regis of the spring:
And topping the soft hill
With sudden joy of emerald fluttering,
Against the sky's bright edge
I see the mighty banners of the King.

Yet not unheralded
The hosts of life to victory are led:
Lo! near at hand
His little band
Of harbingers a subtle music make;
Tight scrolls crisp-rolled
Pricking from out the mould
Along the margins of the dusky brake.
Come, put your ear
To the brown earth, and hear
The glad green shout

With which each baby leaf thrusts out
Toward the clear:
Leaps to achieve its part
In the symphonic poem that breaks from Nature's heart.

Exultant, sacred mirth
That waits upon the vernal ecstasy
Of birth!
Why does she joy?
To what supreme employ
Destines the budding spray?
Does she,
As some proud mother, see
Entangled in her children's downy hair
Meshed glories that declare
An unguessed empery
Of life to be?
The catkins tasselled grey,
Enaureoled
In heavenly gold,
The wonder of the thorn—
Are these the earnests of a distant morn
That shall the woodland dress
With a dread fruitfulness?

Ah, yes!
As in old time
Joy was august, sublime,
And priests could then afford
To dance before the Lord,

Plaiting the patterns sweet
With swift enraptured feet
That worshipped in the ways of metric loveliness,
Then at the altar made their sacrifice complete:
So does the vernal play
Perpetually invite
The deep interior sight
Unto the shrine
Which makes all growth divine.
So does the flowery mist
That lies upon the ground
Prepare a Victim's way;
And every forest sound
Proclaim a Eucharist.

Lo! on those eager branches shall be hung
That Life of which the woods have ever sung;
Making themselves soft harps for the hand o' the rain
To whisper of his pain,
And, 'neath the poignant bowing of the wind
Subdued to move,
Crying to all mankind
The secret of the sacrament of love.
Yea! from a Tree
God shall shine out at thee;
For this doth Nature grow,
To this the kingly banners forward go.

A PORTRAIT

I have a friend; as the world understands
A thing of leisured days
And gracious ways.
She's rare, and fine; her very hands,
The subtle contour of the face,
The gentle manner that commands,
Declare the artistry of race.
The world approves her as she plays
With sweet, sedate, unfaltering art
Within its solemn ritual dance
Her carefully appointed part:
To circle, set to partners, or advance.

Thus seems she to the world. But I
Have seen her soul rush out on wings of prayer
Toward another sky.
As a small bird that beats toward the height
And, all-forgetting, seeks the utmost light,
So have I seen her gallant, eager soul
Love-driven to dare
The giddy spaces of uncharted air:
Here in the hand a little panting thing
That folds a trembling wing
Tight to the throbbing body—there,
Sharp in ascent
On great adventure bent,
One mighty craving for a mightier whole.

And for this secret bird-life that we share,—
Though mine the low and steadfast hovering
And hers the upward fling—
We feel and find
Strange mutual ardours, memories, fears
Which each to each shall ever bind:
For these, when baffling veils are shed,
Make the rapt friendships of the dead.
We are as those who, being bold
To lift them from the prudent ground
And trust the feathered soul, have found—
Not knowing what they sought or why they flew—
A way beyond the flowing years,
Beyond the swiftly-turning spheres,
Into the depth and height,
The length and breadth of an Unmeasured Light.
These breathed an hour the vivid air of grace,
And knew
The all-sufficing wonder of wild space.
Thence coming back,
They never can forget the viewless track:
And though with zest
And loving industry of twig and moss
In the safe hedge they set the woven nest,
They know their loss;
Dream of the sharp delight,
The wind that was a flame,
The wild sweet song, the passion without name,
They knew not they possest.
When the night-skies are clear
And baby birds are sleeping,

These, their maternal office steadfast keeping,
Sudden their sheltering wings will half unfold
In agony of longing uncontrolled.
Then whispered notes of those intemperate songs
Learned in the freedom of the upper air
The homesick heart declare:
The homesick heart that faithful is, but longs
Once more to spread the wing
And mount and sing;
Braving the height, the terror, and the pain
If so it may attain.

COMMUNION IN DARKNESS

I DID not know
That thou wast there:
Yet even so
Shall not the blind be fed?
And didst thou not to these thy healthful gifts declare?
Because they had not light
To find thee out by sight,
Were they not led
By touch to find
The God they might not gaze on, being blind?

And wilt thou not again
Reach through the dark to men?
Shall not thy hand
Nourish those poor, who may not understand
The intricate machinery of grace?
Is it not much
That these, who might not recognise thy face,
Still seek thy touch?
When hast thou said
That only those who see, shall taste the living bread?

DIVINE IGNORANCE

(A Saint Speaks)

This is my prayer, that I shall never find
The secret of thy Name;
Never attain to bind
The zone of thought about thy formless flame.

Grant me this grace, that I may never hear
The one resolving chord
Which shall at last make clear
The deep harmonic mystery of my Lord.

Shield thou my sense, that I may never know
All that thy love can be;
Let not my probing go
To the dread heart of thy divinity.

Wrapped in thy quiet, I do but ask to taste
The sweetness of that night;
Lost in thy trackless waste,
There shall the soul find fulhead of delight.

The anguish of thy sacred dark caress,
Thy love beyond our span,
Self's loss in thine excess:
These be the torment and the joy of man.

THE SECRET PEOPLE

THERE is a Hidden Thing
Whom all the worlds declare
But none disclose:
Who lights the rose
And breathes upon the air
Magical scents of thyme and southernwood,
To whose design
The tiger moth conforms his feathered wing,
Who makes the linnet's sudden note divine
And folds the arum's hood.
All who are touched of its white flame,
Swayed by its sudden wind—
These have the Sparkling Stone and the New Name;
And, since their secret passion is the same,
They are made parts of the adoring mind
That cries in every eager growing thing,
" My Dear, my God, my King."

These, where the swelling downs by inward dream
Uplifted are toward the fields of space,
Discern the foreign gleam
That lights their face
With a shy grace.
They are the friends of loveliness, and know
Its holy rapture and its hidden pain:
The anguished stretch of waters to the moon,

The gay meek kindly rain,
The fragile splendour of the budding sloe,
The stone-pine's slow and difficult increase,
The breathless expectation of high noon
And benediction of the dusk—all these
Moods of the living earth, emblems of love,
Wherewith she may her mighty Husband move
To fruitful new delight, fresh impulse of desire,
Stir in their ardent souls. The vernal fire
Burns them to exaltation. They would thrust
Young shoots from out the dust,
New subtle forms unfold,
New patterns weave
Upon the curious cloth of life, and leave—
The petals of their passion fallen down
To help the faithful mould,
The noble crown
Of swift-forgotten deeds
Blown in light plumy seeds—
Some living germ of loveliness to raise
Fresh children to his praise.

They move within a vivid universe
Quick with a crescent life that cannot die;
Their friendships stretch beyond the aeon's edge
And touch the powdered fringes of the sky
Where radiant Powers rehearse
New dramas of creation. They are given
Of loveliness to come the secret pledge;
For them the veils of the abyss are riven.
They know the bed

Whereon the stars bring forth fresh births sublime,
And hear the solemn tread
Of worlds to be
That crowd the pathways of Eternity
And shake the doors of Time.

The shining dead—
The eager dead, who are alone alive—
Throng in the cloistered chambers of their brain,
In all their efforts strive,
Think in their thoughts, invade
Their coloured and unconquerable dreams.
So these, yet mortal, are immortal made;
They are aware
Of sudden intimations, quickening streams
Of energy untainted of the flesh,
And in their deeds attain
New splendour of fulfilment. Through the mesh
Of baffling sense, sometimes upon the hair
They know a hand in benediction laid,
And feel a Presence there.

None mark them as they go,
Nor guess the secret converse that they hold
With all their kindred: how the dawns and dews
To them are visitations of new power,
How their unresting blood
Beats to the measure of the mighty flood
And thrills to the sharp passage of the hour.
Only their brethren know
That glad and friendly presence. From the mow

See how the ox-eye lifts her peopled flower
To greet them as they pass,
And the wise hedgehog parts the tufted grass
To tell them of his news.
Each woolly fold
Cries to their heart
Its immemorial language understood;
They have immediate speech
With the young emerald beech
And are made part
Of the authentic nations of the wood.

Whilst others walk with prudent sturdy feet
And careful eyes
Upon the planet's crust,
Each in his narrow body all complete,
These have thrown down the barriers that enspan
The cramped sad world of man
And keep him in
Safe-sheltered from his kin.
Yea, these being wise
The murmurous runes of loveliness to trust,
Have plunged within the mighty rhythm of life;
So have they gained the freedom of the skies,
Surrendered to the strife
Have found the primal peace.
These from their narrow body have release;
Being made part of the adoring mind
Which cries in every living growing thing,
" My Dear, my God, my King."

THE ANCHORITE

" Wherefore, my dere Sisteres, luv your windows as lyttill as ye may, and see they be smalle. . . . Ye clothe on them shalle be twofolde: blacke clothe, ye crosse wite."—*The Ancren Riwle.*

Old Covenant

How shall I dare, best-loved, to lift mine eyes
So high to thee;
Risk the effulgence of those ardent skies,
Aspire to see
The radiant clouds of joy and pain that rise
About the fourfold wheels of swift Reality?

Not thus shall fettered souls communion make,
Nor shall they come
At thy fierce torrent's brink their thirst to slake:
Where the white foam
Catches the Uncreated Light, to break
In coloured beauty, there they may not build their home.

But as the love-enclosèd anchorite
Upon his window sets
A dusky veil that checks the flooding light,
And likewise lets
The freedom of his all-adventuring sight;
(Lest, drunk with noontide splendour, he forgets—

Like a poor brand made radiant of thy flame—
His impotence
And the shut cell accepted in love's name)
So I, for my defence
Against the pride that wars upon thy claim,
Set between me and thee the close-wove web of sense.

New Covenant

I hung the curtain when the worlds began,
When as a spark
Of spirit-stuff obedient to thy plan,
I sought this dark.
Glad novice, to the cloistered earth I ran,
And on mine anchor-hold I set thy mark.

Within the twilit room of self confined
Long did I bide,
The twofold cloth upon the heart and mind
Thy face to hide:
To the bright wonder of thy love made blind
That filled the world upon the farther side.

I did not know that love had tried to win
Within my dream,
Against the sheeted black of sense and sin
Pressing a poignant beam.
Sudden I saw fair light that filtered in
And laid upon the floor a narrow gleam.

I saw the holy ray, the slit that went
From depth to height,
Yet left on either side my senses pent
In deeper night:
I thrust an eager hand into the rent,
And tore the tissues that withstood thy light.

Crosswise the wound: crosswise the radiance spread
My cell to fill.
Blessed daring! and oh, courtesy most dread
That my poor skill
Could thus accept, and with man's cunning wed
The awful operations of the Will.

Fourfold thy Name; fourfold the primal spell
Our love did then rehearse,
Achieving heaven and piercing deepest hell.
Pure, generous, fierce,
Wide-armed it stands, embracing all; to tell
The perfect number of thy universe.

NIHIL LONGE DEO

As sleeping infants in their dream despair
  We range, and grope thy breast:
But wake to find that haven everywhere
  And we already blest.

THRUSHES

I THINK the thrush's voice is more like God's
Than many a preacher's telling of the Word;
I think the mother-thrush, who turns the sods
To find fat earth-worms for her baby bird—
And, worn by her maternal toil,
With busy eye and mild
That marks each subtle movement of the soil
Patiently tends upon her greedy child—
She is the feathery image of that grace
Which spends itself to feed our thankless race.

THOUGHT'S A STRANGE LAND

THOUGHT's a strange land.
Some dig its fields with diligence,
Some pass through it steadfastly as pilgrims to the Sepulchre,
Some haste in dust and heat—toward what goal?
Some climb its difficult hills and clouds receive them from our sight.
Some take a neat villa, and plant geraniums in their borders,
And test the drains and trim the wandering roses,
And set up a paling to hide the restless road.

I'm a gipsy therein.

I go leisurely upon the highways,
I try the lanes and trespass in the copses;
I love the soft edge of the straight-driven road,
The bramble and nuts, the comfrey and wild carrot,
The campion and crane's-bill deep in the tufted grass.
Mine are the wild strawberries:
I can spare others the turnips.
There's always a rabbit for my pot.

Thought's a strange land.
It has square, fenced fields for honest farmers—

To each his own field: they never look over the hedge to see what their neighbours are growing.
It has gardens enclosed, full of fragrant and coloured things.
I love the wild places best.
Others may grow admirable cauliflowers,
Crisp chrysanthemums in pots,
Plump calceolarias if they have a mind to them,
Dahlias full of earwigs,
Fuchsias full of sensibility.
(Thought's a strange land!)
But I'm the one that hears the gossip of the waters,
The mysterious whisper of the dew:
I prefer the voices of the aspen to the clack of the threshing machine.

Thought's a strange land.
It's full of small delicate plants, of lonely and solemn spaces
Where the sky is wide and the earth turns under the stars.
It's there I would be,
Touching with love the exquisite blossoms of dream.
There's many an old pasture where I pitch my tent at twilight,
Where the fairy rings are written and the daisies start to my hand:
There's many a lonely fell and rocky valley,
And drink for the gipsy in every enchanted stream.

Thought's a strange land.
Far off, a long day's journey, there's a marsh that
stretches to the sea.
(The sea! the sea!)
It's a place of mystery and danger, the earth shakes
beneath the feet;
I leave my old horse behind when I venture there.
What do they know of it, who till the fields and
herd within the houses:
Of the strange grey plants, the sudden pools, the
wide, the white horizons,
The narrow saltings, where the secret waters come
Creeping between the banks, bringing the solemn
impulse of the ocean,
The stretching fingers of the deep,
Into the very heart of the measured land?
Tall birds breed there:
They nest between the rushes,
And hunt the silent edges of the shore,
And go on their occasions to the sea.

There's news to be had in the marshes—
A salted wind, sharp taste of the hidden wave:
There on the fringes of thought when the night is
falling
I'll wait the invading tide.

TRAMPS

See! the trees on the highway margin
Lift their limbs to the watchful sky.
Still they stand; and the road runs ever.
Still they stand; and the tramps go by.

Down the way which the mind has driven
All the wilds of the world between,
Life goes by on her ceaseless journey;
Steadfast set to an end unseen.

Shameless past and a nameless future,
Tramping, tramping the roads along—
Life, that burns in a vagrant body;
Life, that goes to a vagrant's song.

Upward thrust from the shades of spirit,
Outward thrust from the womb of things,
Vile and battered, august and holy:
Life, invincible life, that sings.

Sings a song of a great becoming,
Sings a song of unceasing strife:
Seething thought and creative passion
Taking form in a vagrant life.

Blindly cutting a path to freedom,
Steadfast set to a shrouded goal;
Urgent life in a wastrel body,
Ardent life in a wastrel soul.

See! the trees on the highway margin
Lift their limbs to the watchful sky.
Still they stand; and the road runs ever.
Still they stand; and the tramps go by.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Died April 23, 1616

And then—the rest?
What did he find
In the unfettered universe of mind,
To whom one fragment of our star revealed,
Complete and unconcealed,
The maze of various man, in coloured music wrought:
God's rich creative thought
Of ardour, grief, and laughter all compact.
Yea! more, beyond the patch of fenced fact,
Where at the edge of dream the air's alive with wings,
Showed him the hidden world of delicate fair things?

With what new zest,
His inward vision healed
Of rheumy time, and from the clipping zone
Of space set free,
He roamed those meadows of eternity
Where the storm blows that comes from the unknown
To shake the crazy windows of the soul
With gusts of strange desire!
Thrust by that favouring gale

Did he set out, as Prospero, to sail
The lonely splendours of the Nameless Sea?
Where did he make the land?
Upon what coasts, what sudden magic isles?
And what quick spirits met he on the strand?
What new mysterious loves swifter than fire
Streaming from out the Love that ever smiles,
What musical sweet shapes, what things grotesque and dear
We know not here,
What starry songs of what exultant quire
Now fill the span
Of his wide-open thought, who grasped the heart of man?

Saints have confessed
That by deep gazing they achieve to know
The hiddenness of God, his rich delight;
And so
There's a keen love some poets have possessed
Sharper than sight
To prick the dark that wraps our spirits round
And, beyond time, see men in its own light.
Those look upon his face,
These in a glass have found
The moving pageant of his eager will:
All the nobility and naughtiness,
Simplicity and skill
Of living souls, that do our dusk redeem
With flaming deed and strangely-smouldering dream.

Great contemplator of humanity!
'Twas thus you saw, and showed to us again
The one divine immortal comedy:
Horror and tears, laughter and loveliness,
All rapture and all pain
Held in one unity's immense embrace,
Set in one narrow place.
Now, in the unwalled playhouse of the True
You know the life from which that drama drew.

THE LAST IGNORANCE

If I knew!
The world's full of women to-day
Who have nothing else to say,
Only one question to ask.
Does death devour or release?
Is it a perilous thing?
What does it bring—
New battles, or passionless peace?
Is beauty the terrible mask
Of a God that loves death and decay?
What of the soul? does he save? does he slay?
If I knew!

O the dark and the empty strangeness!
The in-pressing wonder and dread!
What does it mean to be dead?
My own, my dear,
Whither has life consigned you?
What are the fetters that bind you?
Perhaps you are near
Yet holden of speech—
Too near for my reach
As I stretch my soul out through the desolate air.
And then, are you busy there?
(If I knew!)
The hands full of skill
To interpret your will,

The eyes glad and keen
For the wonderful scene;
Do you miss them now, or is all made new?
(How one gropes for a clue!)

What's it like to be dead?
Fresh colour, fresh song?
A soul fully fed?
A forgetting of wrong?
O for a word, an assurance of you!
I sit and I dream
And I stare at the sky
Just before dusk, when it's clear and we seem
To look beyond sight
To the sources of light.
Then, one can descry
(The sunshine all spent)
A path love may tread
To the world's outer rim,
And illumine the dead
Though here it be dim.
Should my love reach to you
Pressing through—
Though never a gleam
My darkness redeem—
Still I were content.
If I knew.

THE DREAMER IN WAR-TIME

As I went out by Vision-gate
The timid said to me,
"Too late you come! too late—too late!
The light has left the sea,
The torrent of the night's in spate,
The wolves of fear are free."

I left the gate, I went my way
Where faint the pathway showed;
Though black and harsh the shadows lay,
And fierce the darkness flowed,
Though Horror in the night held sway,
I kept the dreamer's road.

For there were hosts who went before
And cried, "O dull and blind!
Ye loiterers at the Vision-door,
Your goal is here to find:
All that your hungry hearts adore,
And all your hopes divined.

"Long time you went in dust and heat
Along the sunny track
Your old accustomed dream to greet;
And turned and hastened back,
Because the wolves of fear were fleet,
Because the night grew black.

" But those who come through Vision-gate
  This angry dark to face,
They run to greet their spirit's mate,
  They go to love's embrace;
For them, the wicket opens straight
  Upon the wayless place.

" It gives upon no sheltered lane,
  It gives upon the Whole;
The sacred web of joy and pain,
  The vast unfinished scroll
Where dying hands have written plain
  The passion of the soul."

THE NAVAL RESERVE

August 4, 1914

From the undiscovered deep
  Where the blessed lie at ease—
Since the ancient navies keep
  Empire of the heavenly seas—
    Back they come, the mighty dead,
    Quick to serve where they have led.

Rushing on the homeward gale,
  Swift they come, to seek their place
Where the grey flotillas sail,
  Where the children of their race
    Now against the foe maintain
    All they gave their lives to gain.

Rank on rank, the admirals
  Rally to their old commands:
Where the crash of battle falls,
  There the one-armed hero stands.
    Loud upon his phantom mast
    Speak the signals of the past.

Where upon the friendly wave
  Stand our squadrons as of old,
Where the lonely deed and brave
  Shall the ancient torch uphold,
    Strive for England, side by side,
    Those who live and those who died.

ENGLAND AND THE SOLDIER

WHAT are the thoughts that England sends to her soldier?
Patient and proud they are, eager and stern to endure:
Faith in the cause, hope for the end, love maternal and glad—
These shape her thoughts for the soldier.

All the peace of England waiting to caress him,
Homely texture of roads, fragrance of autumn gardens—
The dahlia flaunting its standard, the aster starring the sod—
Whisper of falling leaves in the golden coppice,
Evening mist white on the solemn fells;
With these does she refresh her soldier's mind,

England, folded in the twilight,
Gazing with shrouded eyes across her encircling sea:
England, holding on her bosom
Many a village street with infrequent windows shining,
Theatre of sober tasks, of gentle seasonal change.
England wakeful in the night,
Glitter of streets and clang of the coloured tram:
Work and rest and home, the ordered days as of old,
Now seen through the mist of war, impossibly dear.

All this, says England to her soldier,
All this is yours and mine, for it we fight and endure;
For it we offer our lives, side by side on the field,
Suffer the anguish and thirst and the terrible
hospital train,
Or bitter of heart are led to exile in alien lands.
Never alone, my soldier.
Your wounds are England's wounds,
Your labour and gain are hers,
With you I thrust forth to battle,
With you are my frontiers found.
I am there in the horror and pain, the effort, the
splendour, the joy;
And, falling in the fight, England receives her child.

CANDLEMAS, 1915

In Roman Catholic churches on February 2, candles are blessed and distributed to the congregation, and the *Nunc Dimittis* is sung.

In the past years,
We joyed to play the mystery of old;
Strange poem, and sweet
Conclusion of Incarnate Love that told
How a new light was to the Gentiles brought,
A clean and holy light, to pierce the glooms of thought.
We lit our candles to enray the dim,
Gave each to each the flame that figured him:
Yet, in that distant day, the darkness held no fears.

But now all's changed: we, tempest-driven,
To the great night are given.
Beneath our feet
The puzzled world is reeling to despair,
And on its black horizon there's a glare
That mocks our little light.
Dare we, in such a day,
Through all the drifting cohorts of our dead,
And across fields wherefrom the lovely life has fled,
Carry the torch of faith upon its way,

Fulfil the ancient rite?
As sudden lightning mars
The kindly radiance of eternal stars,
So does the splendour of his fury shame
That small, dear flame.

Yet, when the storm is done,
And ere the promised rising of the sun
Makes all thing new,
There comes a black and stilly hour, when all
The quiet stars shine out perpetual
And every homely lamp that seemed to cease
Burns with young beauty in the empty place,
Because the lights are few.
Then, perchance, one
Raising his anguished face,
His poor grey face, from those swept fields of pain,
And peering in the dark before the day,
Most glad shall greet
Our humble light again,
And say,
" Mine eyes have seen, and I depart in peace."

ANY ENGLISHWOMAN

MAY 1915

ENGLAND'S in flower.
On every tree speared canopies unfold,
And sacred beauty crowns the lowliest weeds
Lifting their eager faces from the mould:
Even in this hour
The unrelented pressure of the spring
Thrusts out new lovely life, unfaltering—
Toward what deeds?
What dreadful blossoming?

Ah, the red spines upon the curving briar,
They tear the heart
Great with desire
And sick with sleepless pain
For one that comes not again.
There's horror in the fragrance of the air,
Torment in this intolerable art.
White petals on the pear!
Yet, peering there,
I see beyond the rapture of young green
And passion of pale fire
The glutton Death, who smiles upon the scene.

Last night there was a sudden wind that blew
My joyful branches through.
Yesterday a rich blossom on the spray,
To-day
All the sweet promise of life is vanished away:
Yea, of its ardent petals just a few
White on the ground
I found.
Bury them quick—I must not see them decay.

Others may know the triumph of the year
And coming of the clear
Still days of autumn to redeem our grief.
For them the coloured bough, the noble sheaf:
But I shall see
The petals that fell too soon from the blossoming tree,
And the stain
There on the path, where they rest in the sorrowful rain.

THE RETURN

Our dead are coming home again:
Softly they come, on silent feet.
Even as with joy we gave our men,
So their return is sweet.

Together they went forth. Now one by one
They slip into the ancient place;
And we, that thought ourselves alone,
Glimpse the remembered face—

Meet in the shattered homestead of the heart
The old familiar touch, the faithful ways,
The dear known hands, that still possess the art
To mend our broken days.

NON-COMBATANTS

NEVER of us be said
That we reluctant stood
As sullen children, and refused to dance
To the keen pipe that sounds across the fields of France.
Though shrill the note and wild,
Though hard the steps and slow,
The dancing floor defiled,
The measure full of woe,
And dread
The solemn figure that the dancers tread,
We faltered not. Of us, this word shall not be said.

Never of us be said
We had no war to wage,
Because our womanhood,
Because the weight of age,
Held us in servitude.
None sees us fight,
Yet we in the long night
Battle to give release
To all whom we must send to seek and die for peace.
When they have gone, we in a twilit place
Meet Terror face to face,
And strive
With him, that we may save our fortitude alive.

Theirs be the hard, but ours the lonely bed.
Nought were we spared—of us, this word shall not be said.

Never of us be said
We failed to give God-speed to our adventurous dead.
Not in self-pitying mood
We saw them go,
When they set forth upon the wings of pain:
So glad, so young,
As birds whose fairest lays are yet unsung
Dart to the height
And thence pour down their passion of delight,
Their passing into melody was turned.
So were our hearts uplifted from the low,
Our griefs to rapture burned;
And, mounting with the music of that throng,
Cutting a path athwart infinity,
Our puzzled eyes
Achieved the healing skies
To find again
Each winged spirit as a speck of song
Embosomed in thy deep eternity.
Though from our homely fields that feathered joy has fled
We murmur not. Of us, this word shall not be said.

INVOCATION

THOU source of all who seek to sing,
Forgive me that my verses fail,
Forgive my clumsy words that cling
About thine all-revealing veil
Woven of sound, that should impart
The vision of the poet's heart.

I too have heard thy ceaseless song,
I have discerned thy radiant feet
That flash in rhythmic dance among
The squalors of the city street:
And in its gutters every day
Have seen thy ragged angels play.

For deep the secret world within,
I feel thy stirring soft and strange,
And know all growing things my kin
In this, thy nursery of change:
In every kitten's fluffy dress
Our Father's cunning I confess.

How shall I tell what I have known?
For thy great pipe my breath is faint;
With generous hand thy love hath sown,
Its harvest fields I may not paint.
Though every sense cry out thy Name,
My song may not declare the same.

Yet since the humble lover can
  Ask all things, as thy seers have told,
Within thy mighty metric span
  My faltering song do thou enfold:
    That in thy symphony of grace
    The note of failure find its place.

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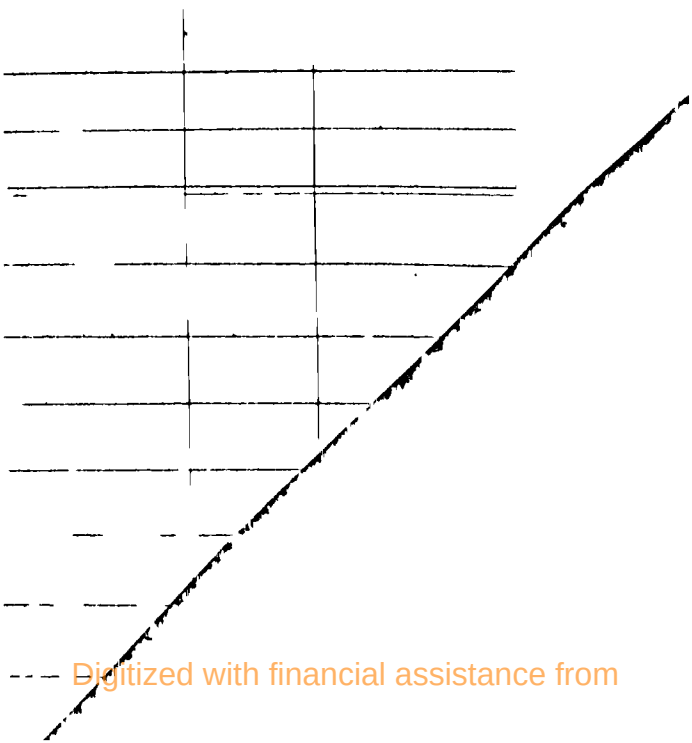

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WITH YOU, RIGHT THROUGH

on 15 October, 2018